

The Chat



Newsletter of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society, serving East Central Indiana

Volume 36 , No. 3

May/June 2010

May 10th:

WEEDS: The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly



Quick: Is a dandelion a weed or a flower? Depending on where you're from, what you use it for (if anything), where it's growing, and the emotional response it creates in you, the answer will vary. But why?

Join us on Monday, **May 10**, when **Daisy Fryman**, an educator and scientist with the Purdue Extension in Delaware County, will present a program on her specialty: weeds! She'll give us an overview of "weeds" and their relationship with different environments. Why are certain plants disparaged as weeds in some places but not in others?

Daisy, who received her bachelor's and master's degrees in Plant and Soil Sciences (focusing on crops, and livestock management, and weed science), will answer these and other questions. She'll also tell us about the important work done by the Purdue Extension, which she calls "the best kept secret" throughout Indiana.

Refreshments and time to socialize will begin at Minnetrista at 7:00, followed by the chapter meeting at 7:15 and Daisy's program at 7:30. As always, non-Audubon members are welcomed, so bring a friend!

New conservation project

The RCAS board recently voted to join forces with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to restore 50 acres of the **Zeigler Woods Nature Preserve**, in Henry County.

WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program) funds will support up to \$16,500 of the total project, estimated at \$22,000. Our board has voted to provide \$3,000 of the remaining \$5,500 to carry out this important restoration work.

The remaining \$2,500 is being generously donated through our chapter by Marjorie Zeigler. Twenty years ago, Marj and her husband Sherman purchased the land and donated it to the Nature Conservancy. It was later turned over to the state and is now the only nature preserve in Henry County.

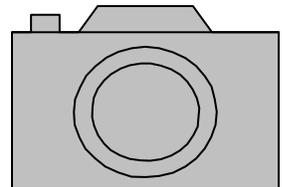
Work on the project will get underway shortly and be completed this summer. A field trip to tour the property is being planned.

More details about this project follow on page 3.

June 14th:

YOUR SLIDE SHOW

Have you snapped a great shot at the backyard feeder or maybe captured some wonderful scenes of nature during your travels? We want you to share them in our all-chapter slide show, **June 14**, at Minnetrista. All members and friends of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society are invited to participate!



To submit images:

You may submit up to 15 images, in digital format. Please number them in order of priority (1 = most important) in case we receive too many for the time allotted. Every participant will have the opportunity to share a brief explanation of each image.

Please email images to martha.a.hunt@gmail.com. Or, if you prefer, you may submit them by mail by sending a CD to Martha Hunt at: 5424 N County Road 500 E, Albany, IN 47320. Be sure to include your contact information, name, phone and e-mail. **Deadline for submissions is June 7.**

Our June 14 meeting will begin at 7 pm, with refreshments, followed by chapter elections and other business at 7:15 and the program at 7:30.

May/June Field Trips

May 1-2: Field trip to Magee Marsh on Lake Erie

RCAS is pairing up with the Mississinewa Audubon Club for an overnight birding trip to Magee Marsh (formerly Crane Creek) and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge.

Currently, 9 people are registered for the trip. If you're interested in going, you may still join us, but you will be responsible for finding accommodations. We will leave around 7:30 am on Saturday, May 1, and return Sunday afternoon, May 2. The plan is to caravan with the Mississinewa Audubon Club, leaving from the Marion I-69 exit (#64), St. Rd. 18.

Please feel free to call or email Sarah McKillip, field trip coordinator, for more information (765) 287-8464 or smregister@bsu.edu.

Possible Hotel Option:

Holiday Inn Express, 3154 Navarre Ave., Oregon, OH 43616
(419) 691-8800

Visit our website (www.cooperaudubon.org) for more information on the Magee Marsh Wildlife area, driving maps, and a map of the area.

May 8th

IAS May Day Bird Count

This year's Indiana Audubon Society Big May Day Count will be conducted on Saturday, May 8, which is also International Migratory Bird Day. The count is statewide on a county-by-county basis. Participants may count either in the field or at feeders.

Participants are needed for this fun, important "citizen science" activity! If you are interested in participating in Delaware Co., please contact Bill Grummer at billcarolee@comcast.net or 765-254-1943.

June Trip TBA

A field trip at Zeigler Woods, coordinated by our Conservation Group, is in the planning stages for June.

Check www.cooperaudubon.org in May for more information to come.

June 5th:

Bicycling and Birding on the Cardinal Greenway

Bring your bikes, friends, and binoculars for a leisurely morning of biking and birding along the Cardinal Greenway! We will meet at the Wysor St. Depot at 8:00 am on June 5 and ride south toward Mansfield Park (distance is up to participants). Birds we will likely encounter include American Goldfinches, Indigo Buntings, Gray Catbirds, and other common summer favorites.



Plans are in the works to have a Wysor Depot docent tell us more about the greenway and the natural areas surrounding the trails after our ride. (The depot opens at 10 a.m.)

Visit www.cardinalgreenways.org for more information about the greenway. The Wysor St. Depot is located at 700 E. Wysor St. in Muncie (765-287-0399).

See you in the fall....

The *Chat* is going on summer vacation for July and August but will resume with the September issue. Likewise, our chapter meetings will be on hiatus during July and August but will be back in action for the annual fall picnic. Be sure to mark the tentative picnic date—Sunday, September 12—on your calendar!

To stay informed about RCAS events over the summer, remember to visit our chapter website, at www.cooperaudubon.org. Better yet, send a note to cooperaudubon@gmail.com to receive email notices about upcoming events.

Zeigler Woods Restoration Project

By Jon Creek, vice-president

Zeigler Woods Nature Preserve is 129 acres located at the southwest corner of Summit Lake State Park in Henry County. Seventy-nine acres are high quality upland forest with ephemeral wetlands, and the rest is a brome grass cow pasture that now has scattered ash and hawthorn trees in some areas.

In tandem with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), our chapter is supporting a restoration plan that will convert the brome grass, a Eurasian exotic, to native grass and forbs. The new habitat will be ideal for Bobwhite Quail, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl and other grassland species that have suffered significant population declines.

The work will be completed by Eco Logic of Bloomington, Ind., a restoration company with extensive experience working with The Nature Conservancy and the IDNR on major projects. Ecologic has specialized equipment and techniques that are key to the success of this type of restoration project.

The project manager is Tom Swinford, Regional Ecologist with the IDNR Division of Nature Preserves. He is supported by Kent Hanauer, INDR Wildlife Biologist, providing technical resources and financial aid courtesy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Fund, and by Dan Robinson, assistant property manager of Summit Lake State Park, providing ongoing follow up habitat maintenance support.

RCAS, thanks in large part to the generous support of Marj Zeigler, will provide \$5,500 of the total \$22,000 needed, as well as restoration support at Zeigler Woods and the adjacent Summit Lake State Park property. Our chapter's Conservation Group has been removing bush honeysuckle and autumn olive in the project area for several weeks this spring and will continue its efforts at the project progresses.

The Zeigler Woods restoration project continues cooperative efforts that our RCAS Conservation Group has undertaken with Summit Lake State Park and IDNR for the last three years. That work includes two osprey platforms, wetland plantings, extensive honeysuckle removal, and the Robin Scott project. Additional RCAS project areas are the DeHart farm along the Mississinewa River and the Cummings Farm/American Water company project on the west side of 463E at Prairie Creek.

Information about funding for this project is found on page 1.

If you'd like to get involved with our chapter's conservation activities, contact Jon Creek at jcreek34@yahoo.com. For more details about RCAS conservation efforts, visit www.cooperaudubon.org.

RCAS Conservation Chair in the News

Charlie Mason, RCAS Conservation Chair, was named a finalist for Muncie's "Person of the Year" because of his tireless commitment to planting trees around East Central Indiana. You can read about his nomination at: http://issuu.com/tspmuncie/docs/0127__person_of_year__betsy.

Starting with the work that he and his wife Charlotte initiated at West View Elementary in 2007, Charlie has purchased, planted, and distributed thousands of saplings to organizations and individuals, and he's educated hundreds of people about the importance of trees.

Most recently, Charlie and other members of our chapter's Conservation Committee and Board of Directors (Jeff Ray and Dave Cramer among them) brought 1,550 saplings to ECI on behalf of our chapter.

You can read more about Charlie's work in the "Conservation and Education" section of www.cooperaudubon.org. There you'll also find links to Muncie Star Press photographs and video of the 1,550 saplings' arrival in Muncie a few weeks ago.

Many of RCAS's conservation activities will be featured in the May issue of *M Magazine*, due to hit newsstands in mid-May.

Board Update

If you've been lurking on the sidelines of our Audubon chapter but have never stepped forward to take a more active role, we need your help! The following board positions still need to be filled for the upcoming Audubon year: Education Chair, Hospitality Chair, and Publicity Chair.

Please contact Barb Stedman, at bastedman@gmail.com or 765-288-2890, for information about each of these positions.

At our regular program meeting on June 14, we'll vote on candidates for all of these board positions. Please make attendance at the June 14 meeting a priority, so that you can offer your "yea" or "nay."

The slate of nominees will be announced at www.cooperaudubon.org in mid- to late May.

Report from RCAS Scholarship Recipient, Julia Hill



Note: Earlier this year, the RCAS board awarded a \$500 scholarship to Julia Hill, to help fund her participation in the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association symposium, in Seattle. Julia is a junior at Ball State, majoring in wildlife biology in order to become a professional wildlife rehabilitator. She has been a volunteer at the Wildlife Resqu Haus (Yorktown) most Saturdays since January 2009.

Ever since I completed an internship at a nature center during my senior year in high school, I have wanted to pursue a career as a wildlife rehabilitator. Besides working toward a biology degree at Ball State University, I have looked for other opportunities to increase my knowledge of wildlife biology. Due to the generosity of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society, I was able to attend the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association's annual symposium in Seattle from March 8-13.

If you've never dissected a great blue heron in a fancy four-diamond hotel, I would highly recommend the experience. The Hyatt Regency where we stayed was beautiful and very accommodating for the unusual needs of the symposium, which included the storage and transport of over a hundred mammal and bird carcasses used in workshops. These animals were patients of rehab facilities that had not survived treatment, but we used their unfortunate deaths as learning opportunities.

I attended several of the hands-on workshops, all of which focused on immediate emergency care for incoming wildlife patients. I jumped right in with an all-day workshop on patient evaluation and stabilization, where I gave my poor barred owl carcass multiple intramuscular, intravenous, and subcutaneous injections in her featherless tracts and performed a necropsy on her well-fed body (she had died of some sort of head injury). Throughout the week I was able to practice many rehab procedures including physical examinations, administration of fluids, bandaging wounds and broken limbs, and tube feeding.

I also went to as many lectures as I could, on subjects as diverse as "Home Depot 101 for Songbird Rehabilitators" and "Medical Conditions of Wild Virginia Opossums." Topics even went beyond wildlife medicine. Author David Scott presented a summary of his soon-to-be-published book on North American bird feather identification. Gail Buhl, a wonderful animal trainer and educator from the Minnesota Raptor Center, demonstrated some education techniques that she uses with the public, including a papier-mâché "owl pellet" the size of a small child that can be used to demonstrate how owls eat their prey.

Though I didn't have enough time to explore the habitats unique to the Pacific Northwest, I did see several beautiful (albeit dead) native species at the symposium, including Stellar's jays, mountain beavers, and a pacific loon. I also met people there who were as unique and individual as the various representations of wildlife I encountered: passionate, fun people who love their job of patching up wildlife, no matter how labor-intensive and low-paying it is. Everyone I talked to encouraged me to continue my studies in school, and the veterinarians that I spoke with even suggested that I should think about going to vet school if I want to be in wildlife rehab for the long run.

The experience provided me with some great contacts, awesome learning experiences, and lots to think about concerning my future career path. I send out my sincere thanks to the Audubon Society for covering the majority of my costs!

Garden Fair Volunteers Needed

We're looking for volunteers to help staff our Audubon table at this year's Garden Fair, at Minnetrista. The Garden Fair runs from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Sat., June 5, and 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. on Sun., June 6. Please call Marcia Johnson at 288-5629 if you're willing to help for a two-hour shift either day.

Be sure to visit the Fair, which will include a full weekend of plants to peruse and buy, demonstrations, refreshments, and more. See www.minnetrista.net for details.



Coming to the **Living Lightly Fair** on Sept. 18, at Minnetrista: Ian Cheney, one of the creators of the *King Corn* film.

Visit www.livinglightlyfair.org this summer for more information!

May/June Bird of the Month: Sandhill Crane

Sandhill Crane:
Grus Canadensis
By Helen Twibell



The Sandhill Crane is a very tall bird with long neck and long legs. Its height can be from 34" to 48", and its wingspan is 6'8", which

makes for a beautiful sight when the bird is taking flight. The crane's plumage – largely gray with a red patch of skin on the forehead – sometimes appears rusty because of iron stains from tundra ponds.

Although the Sandhill Crane does not generally breed in Indiana, it can still be seen in large numbers at the Jasper-Pulaski State Fish and Wildlife Area in northwestern Indiana. More than 10,000 Sandhill Cranes stop there each year during fall migration. In 1991, the fall migration was estimated at 32,000. The large gathering of cranes calling "kar-r-r-r-o-o-o" must be almost deafening!

While there are several races of Sandhill Cranes, some sedentary and some migratory, the Greater Sandhill Crane is found at Jasper-Pulaski. These birds begin coming in September and most are usually gone by December, depending on the severity of the winter, as they head to southern Georgia and Florida.

During spring migration, cranes flying north to the breeding grounds – Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota – begin to arrive at Jasper-Pulaski in late February and continue to move through until the second week of April. At any given time during the period, 4,000-7,000 birds can be ex-

pected.

The cranes' diet consists of waste grains, such as corn, wheat and other seeds, berries, tender vegetation, roots and tubers. They sometimes make tunnel-like holes in the mucky soil with their long beaks while digging tubers. Mice, lemmings, crayfish, snakes and insects seem to be taken in small quantities when they are available. The cranes leave the roosting and gathering area at dawn to feed in surrounding farmland. Then, after feeding, they like to meet other cranes in a specified place and socialize before heading back to the general gathering place. As evening approaches, the birds return at a greater pace. Even after sunset and into dusk the sky swarms with the large birds.

Two towers at Jasper-Pulaski allow birdwatchers to view this awesome spectacle, as well as the cranes' mating and socializing dance on a large open field. Members of a pair face each other, bow and leap into the air (sometimes 15' to 20') with wings extended and feet thrown forward. They then turn, bow and repeat. They may vocalize during this time, as a duet, the female singing twice as many notes as the male. Courting birds also run about with outstretched wings and toss grass tufts into the air. But dancing is not confined to the breeding season, nor to pairs. Hundreds of single birds may dance at the same time.

The Sandhill Crane's nest is located on the ground or sometimes in a quiet marsh, surrounded by water. It is a heap of plant material, several feet wide, with two eggs, spotted with brown. Both parents share in

incubation, so that the eggs hatch in a month, and in tending the young, who are able to fly in two months.

A local site for viewing migrating water birds is less well-known, but no doubt attracts birdwatchers in rainy, wet years to view cranes and other birds in migration. Between Montpelier and Hartford City is an area under which flows an underground river system. In years with heavy rainfall, great pools of water remain above ground and attract all kinds of water birds, mostly migrants. My friend who lives in this area reports having seen Sandhill Cranes two years in a row (but not this year or last) near a wooded place close to her home. Water birds are also attracted to large farm ponds in the region.

Migrating Sandhill Cranes may not be hunted or killed, as they are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, which prohibits the hunting of these birds. Previously, many were killed perhaps because of large numbers and destruction of crops caused by their feeding habits. Supposedly, crane meat is good eating, better than wild goose, if cooked properly. Some states allow hunting Sandhill Cranes, but these may be permanent residents and/or of a different race of crane.

The migratory Sandhill Crane population seems to be in no danger at this point. Jasper County, however, keeps a close eye on disease caused by water contamination or brought in by other birds. Also, much land adjacent to the wildlife refuge is beginning to interest housing developers. The hope is that ways may be found to preserve the status quo of the mi-

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Dated Material– Please Deliver Promptly

The Chat is published 5 times a year by the Robert Cooper Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, serving Blackford, Delaware, Grant, Henry, Jay, Madison, and Randolph counties.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Dates for Your Calendar</u></p> <p>May 1-2: Magee Marsh Overnight Field Trip May 8: May Day Bird Count May 10: “Weeds: The Good, Bad, Ugly” June 5: Bicycling/birding on Cardinal Greenway June 14: All-chapter slide show Sept. 12: Fall picnic (tentative date) Sept. 18: Living Lightly Fair</p> <p>Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org Email: cooperaudubon@gmail.com</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Meetings</u></p> <p>Program meetings are held on the second Monday of each month (except July & August) at Minnetrista Cultural Center 1200 N. Minnetrista Parkway Muncie, IN</p> <p>7:00 p.m.: Coffee and Gathering 7:15 p.m.: Chapter Business 7:30 p.m.: Scheduled Program</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Printed on recycled paper 25% post-consumer fiber</p> </div>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Officers</u></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>President:</td> <td>Barb Stedman</td> <td>288-2890</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vice-President:</td> <td>Jon Creek</td> <td>348-4019</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Recording Sec.:</td> <td>Barb Hesselgrave</td> <td>228-9673</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Treasurer</td> <td>Nora Nunnelly</td> <td>284-0751</td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Directors</u></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>2009-2010</td> <td>Dave Cramer</td> <td>260-726-9492</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Frank Meeker</td> <td>289-5635</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2009-2011</td> <td>Joel Jeffcoat</td> <td>286-2896</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Phil Tuttle</td> <td>289-4251</td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Committee Chairs</u></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Conservation:</td> <td>Charlie Mason</td> <td>288-9937</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Education:</td> <td><i>Vacant</i></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Field Trip:</td> <td>Sarah McKillip</td> <td>287-8464</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hospitality:</td> <td>Cynda Turner</td> <td>289-9390</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Membership:</td> <td>Laurie Lindberg</td> <td>282-7516</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Newsletter Ed.</td> <td>Meredith Sims</td> <td>317-640-8205</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Program:</td> <td>Lois Rockhill</td> <td>287-8698</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Publicity:</td> <td><i>Vacant</i></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	President:	Barb Stedman	288-2890	Vice-President:	Jon Creek	348-4019	Recording Sec.:	Barb Hesselgrave	228-9673	Treasurer	Nora Nunnelly	284-0751	2009-2010	Dave Cramer	260-726-9492		Frank Meeker	289-5635	2009-2011	Joel Jeffcoat	286-2896		Phil Tuttle	289-4251	Conservation:	Charlie Mason	288-9937	Education:	<i>Vacant</i>		Field Trip:	Sarah McKillip	287-8464	Hospitality:	Cynda Turner	289-9390	Membership:	Laurie Lindberg	282-7516	Newsletter Ed.	Meredith Sims	317-640-8205	Program:	Lois Rockhill	287-8698	Publicity:	<i>Vacant</i>	
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